

JLASS: Celebrating 25 Years of Educating Future Leaders

By SEAN R. CONNORS and THEODORE P. OGREN

The academic year is well under way at the Services' senior level colleges (SLCs). At each college, an elective course is entering its 25th year of educating the Nation's future leaders of strategic and operational art. That course is the Joint Land, Aerospace, and Sea Simulation (JLASS). The centerpiece of this unique course, which focuses on joint campaign planning and execution, is a dynamic unscripted wargame set 10 years in the future.

Designed to challenge tomorrow's strategic leaders and thinkers, JLASS continues to be the only course offered and jointly run by all joint professional military education (JPME) SLCs. Over 100 students participate in JLASS each year, and over 1,000 have benefited since its inception.

In the course, senior field grade officers, equivalent Defense Department civilians, and colleagues from other U.S. Government agencies are challenged to address strategic and operational problems. JLASS places emphasis on combating weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats and homeland security issues, as well as traditional and nontraditional challenges in almost every combatant command area of responsibility, striving to stay one step ahead of emerging threats to national security. JLASS has evolved since its inception and today replicates critical national security threats facing the United States in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 world.

What Is JLASS?

Federal law and joint directives task each of the senior level colleges to provide education in the strategic and operational employment of the Armed Forces in conjunction with the other instruments of national power. JLASS is one of the primary



Maxwell Air Force Base (Melanie Hodges)

Student participates as member of Multinational Force Morocco under USEUCOM at Air Force Wargaming Institute

vehicles for the advanced study of these topics. The simulation expands participants' understanding of the interagency, multinational/joint staff, and unified combatant command issues by employing forces to execute national- and theater-level strategies. It prepares joint warfighters by providing the opportunity to develop, apply, and adjust theater strategies.

JLASS is the only joint course that explores Service capabilities in a learning environment that not only allows but also encourages risk-taking. It places students in a high pressure but nonthreatening situation and allows them to learn to ask the right questions, explore military options in support of political objectives, and experiment by employing innovative teaching concepts at a pivotal time in their careers.

Evolution

While JLASS is a critical component of JPME for future leaders, the exercise is by no means new. In fact, JLASS has a long and proud tradition that officially began when a series of computer-assisted simulations called CARMAX (for Carlisle and Maxwell) was

held from 1983 to 1985. CARMAX played the Air-Land Battle in the Allied Forces Central Europe area of responsibility (AOR), and the exercise was conducted simultaneously at the U.S. Army War College and the Air War College using a microcomputer interface for communication.

These pre-Goldwater-Nichols Act exercises established the JLASS pedigree as the cutting edge educational exercise. The CARMAX project produced better understanding between the Army and Air Force war colleges regarding procedures, doctrines, and operations—the foundation of jointness. Portions of the CARMAX simulation were incorporated into exercises within the core curricula of both colleges. CARMAX achieved its objectives by 1985, and a new series of exercises was established to include sea and space along with air and land dimensions.

The transformed series was renamed the Joint Land, Aerospace, and Sea Simulation and was sponsored by the SLCs from 1986 to 1988. Exercises in this series included April 1986 (Central Europe) in a partially distributed exercise; April 1987 (Korean Peninsula) at the

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Naval War College; and May 1988 (Korean Peninsula) at the Air Force Wargaming Institute (AFWI). A second series of exercises was agreed on for the next 5 years (1989–1993), and a third series from 1994 to 1998. All exercises were held at AFWI and used the U.S. Pacific Command as the theater of war.

JЛАSS Today

As JЛАSS begins its 25th year, its goal continues to be addressing key issues regarding the strategic and operational levels of national security. JЛАSS accomplishes this by enhancing and expanding participants'

portals, telephone, video teleconferences, and face-to-face meetings. This year, students will switch from the AFWI-sponsored Web site to tools within Collaborative Force Building Analysis, Sustainment, and Transportation (CFAST) for their distributed collaboration. The completion of national strategies and regional campaign plans closes out the distributive phase for each school. In mid-April, phase two (exercise phase) begins at Maxwell Air Force Base. There, during a week-long execution phase, students exercise campaign plans during an unscripted wargame.

the simulation prepares joint warfighters by providing the opportunity to develop, apply, and adjust theater strategies

awareness of the interagency process and joint staff and unified command issues by employing diplomacy and joint and multinational forces to execute national- and theater-level strategies. Thus, students must translate national security and military strategy/objectives into theater campaigns while employing all elements of national power; designing and using theater command and control procedures and relationships; applying an understanding of U.S. military force structure, capabilities, and limitations; and demonstrating a comprehension of the challenges facing a joint/multinational force employing future military and commercial systems.

JЛАSS consists of two phases: a distributive phase conducted from October through March, and an exercise phase consisting of a dynamic, intensive, and unscripted week-long wargame held in April at the AFWI. To ensure that students focus on future threats and issues and do not limit themselves to fighting current threats and wars, the course and its exercise are projected 10 years into the future. The situations the students are given to focus on and plan against are initially presented in a World Summary document and video. Over the course of the distributive phase, they receive regular briefings in the form of scenario updates and intelligence reporting. The distributive phase is devoted to joint campaign planning course work at each of the participating schools. During this phase, collaboration among schools is an essential component, and the students interact via an AFWI-sponsored Web site, Web-based

This two-phase structure exposes participants to a broad range of challenges, such as countering the proliferation of WMD and consequence management, cyber and physical attack against the U.S. electrical power grid, major earthquakes, freedom of navigation in international and contested waters, tensions between China and Japan or China and Taiwan, the challenges facing U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), threats to global energy supplies, piracy, insurgency, border disputes, and the war on terror. To address these challenges, each college's student team assumes the role of a critical component of the national security establishment.

Combatant Commands and National Security Apparatus

The Service colleges play the role of the geographic combatant commands, organizing their students in Joint Staff fashion with the objective of translating national strategies into operational plans. For example, the U.S. Army War College plays U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), the Naval War College plays U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), the Air War College plays U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), and the Marine Corps War College plays U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).

At the National Defense University, the National War College (NWC) is in its third year playing the role of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), while the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), in addition to playing U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) and the

Class members conduct mock press conference



Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), plays multiple national level departmental roles, including the National Security Council (NSC).

During JЛАSS 2007, the students confronted a host of issues and challenges. A rundown of the combatant command AORs and the national level challenges illustrates the diversity of issues that are dealt with within this single course.

USEUCOM. Students from the Army War College dealt with issues surrounding a North African nation confronting both internal attacks by two insurgent groups with varying agendas and an invasion by a rogue nation that possibly had WMD capability supplied by another state, along with dealing with a reluctant U.S.-led coalition. Additionally, there were "loose-nuke" issues elsewhere within the AOR that had to be planned against and dealt with. Students experienced the entire spectrum of operations as they transitioned from counterinsurgency to major combat operations, to stability, security, transition, and reconstruction, and finally to a follow-on North Atlantic Treaty Organization peacekeeping force. They were also routinely challenged to sort out command and control options for complex issues, such as counterterrorism special operations and global strike



Maxwell Air Force Base (Melanie Rodgers)

options for WMD prosecution that simultaneously involved multiple combatant commanders. This year, Army War College students will be even further challenged as they take on the role of USAFRICOM in dealing with those crises.

During the exercise phase, there was a defining moment that illustrated a unique aspect of JЛАSS. The USEUCOM commander was at odds with key members of the Departments of State and Defense on the best course of action in the reconstruction phase. Should a major Asian power lead the effort as requested by the host nation? Or should it be a coalition of those on more friendly terms with the United States? In the end, working with other affected combatant commanders, the team was able to persuade the host government and secure approval from the President and Secretary of Defense for the latter.

USPACOM. Students from the Naval War College confronted a number of challenges in the enormous region that composes the USPACOM AOR. They exercised the operational art of integrating military options with all the instruments of national power in a largely maritime environment. Their commander, Colonel Robert Oltman, USMC, and his joint staff (comprising stu-

dents from each of the four Services plus one from the State Department) crafted a creative theater security cooperation plan that established centers of excellence throughout the region to combat terrorism. These centers, hosted by seven nations in cooperation with USPACOM, organized, engaged, and supported other regional partners to deter and defeat not only terrorism but also piracy and illicit trafficking in the AOR, thereby enhancing regional stability. At the same time, they had to plan military options to defuse rising tensions brought on by the Chinese military occupation of China-Japan disputed islands and oil resources in the East China Sea, while dealing with a significant humanitarian crisis complicated by rogue elements within a newly reunified Korea.

USCENTCOM. Within this AOR, the focus was Iran. But not all students were on the Blue Team. While it was common in past years to have multiple student cells playing adversary countries, this year only the Air War College fielded a student Red Team. Other Red Teams were played by faculty and JЛАSS staff. The Iran team, led by "Supreme Leader" Colonel Brian Searcy, USAF, presented Blue a worthy adversary by effectively applying lessons on effects-based campaign plans and integrating Iranian instruments of national power. On the other side of the emerging conflict, Colonel Marcus De Oliveira, USA, and his joint staff of 16 military officers and 2 Defense civilians developed

tinental nuclear missile to exercise the North American Aerospace Defense Command function. To contend with these challenges, students had to understand maritime law and navigation, nonstandard WMD (a deliberate explosion of commercial chemical products), and defense support to civilian authorities.

USSOCOM. Representing the National War College, Colonel Valerie Jircitano, USA, and her team of eight acted as the supported command for the war on terror and the force provider for Special Operations Forces. With all that was going on in the 2017 JЛАSS world, their forces were much in demand. The wargame allowed students to strategically synchronize missions with other national and international activities. According to Colonel Jeff Cairns, USA, NWC faculty and JЛАSS USSOCOM cell lead, "the students got credible feedback regarding the daily moves as well as the most realistic media training available. Overall, USSOCOM students achieved the course objectives in a superb manner."

USTRANSCOM and DLA. Also in high demand were transportation and supply resources. The six-student cell from ICAF, led by Lieutenant Colonels Jim MacFalane and Buddy Berry, both USAF, adapted joint distribution process owner concepts to move forces globally and keep them supplied. Often out of sight, but truly vital for strategic and operational success, the resourcing component enabled combatant commander plans to become reality. As noted by Paul Needham,

each college's student team assumes the role of a critical component of the national security establishment

and executed their USCENTCOM effects-based campaign. The free play between teams permitted ample educational feedback to all participating students, though not necessarily in the form of successful outcomes. For example, the Strait of Hormuz was shut down, causing a U.S. and global economic upheaval and driving the United States to tap into its strategic petroleum reserve.

USNORTHCOM. On the home front, after supporting civil agencies in earthquake relief, students from the Marine War College were "put through their paces" developing theater plans to cope with, sequentially, a large power grid failure due to terrorist attack, a cargo ship carrying hazardous cargo acting as a WMD, and the threat of a rogue intercon-

ICAf faculty and USTRANSCOM and DLA cell lead, "without proper logistical planning, strategic operational concepts are just dreams."

NSC. The remaining 16 ICAF students were "stretched thin developing and translating U.S. national security objectives in numerous JЛАSS National Security Council meetings in crisis mode," according to Ambassador Robin Sanders, ICAF International Affairs advisor and prominent JЛАSS 2007 faculty team member. Led by Colonel Kent Jacocks, USA, the student National Security Advisor, the team "stepped up to the plate" as top Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, White House Press, Coast Guard, national intelligence,

and Joint Staff leaders. They integrated all elements of national power, drawing praise from the JLASS U.S. President, Colonel Mike Pasquarett, USA (Ret.), a professor at the Army War College—the only exercise role played by JLASS faculty.

Game Support

JLASS game support is not limited to Professor Pasquarett and each school's team of two to eight faculty members. Key to integrating the occasionally competing demands of each school's learning objectives is the JLASS exercise director and JLASS Steering Group chair, Colonel Mike Gould, USA, and his assistant, Ritchie Dion, both on staff at the Center for Strategic Leadership at the U.S. Army War College. Their leadership helps to maintain the game on an even keel and to bring in support from many other U.S. Government organizations. Highlighting the potential that each JLASS student possesses, Colonel Gould kicks off the execution phase and completes the after action review. According to Colonel Gould, "Someone in the room is the next Dick Cody, or combatant commander, or Secretary of State. This exercise is a freebie of sorts, an opportunity to be involved in an experiential learning venue that addresses the most complex strategic and operational issues our faculty can design."

Two noteworthy organizations supporting JLASS are the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) and the Joint Requirements Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defense (JRO-CBRND). Lieutenant Colonel Dennis Kilcullen, USA (Ret.), leads a team from JSOU providing current expertise and advice to all the participants and faculty on emerging special operations organization and doctrine. Combating WMD expert Colonel Roy Williams, USA (Ret.), on loan with his people from the JRO-CBRND, helps form realistic scenario input and mentor students in developing counterproliferation and consequence management plans. In addition to these two organizations, and rounding out support staff expertise, are representatives from the U.S. Strategic Command, Coast Guard, and Department of State, all making unique contributions.

With so many roles played in JLASS, who plays the rest of the world? Colonel Lee Blank, USAF (Ret.), a 14-year JLASS veteran, and his "Green Cell" team from the National Strategic Gaming Center provide a continuous stream of answers to student questions about other countries' intentions and role-

play an occasional foreign ambassador, U.S. state Governor, or Member of Congress. They represent the world to the students during the daytime game play. At night, after all the role-players and most of the faculty have departed, the AFWI "White Cell" control team, led by Colonel Tim Gunnoe, USAFR, compares Blue student moves against Red and produces an updated picture of the world for the students' next move deliberations. According to Colonel Gunnoe, "One of the reasons for the longevity and success of JLASS is the experi-

media inputs prompt students to react to news as it affects game play

ence level of the controllers and the almost 1-to-1 ratio of students to controllers and subject matter experts."

When they return in the morning, the students, in addition to receiving current 2017 intelligence briefings, gather relevant information by watching the Global News Network broadcast, designed to replicate the network evening news, and read the "Early Worm" news summary, both produced during the night by Lieutenant Colonel Ruth Latham, USAFR, and her media cell. These media inputs prompt students to react to news as it affects game play. Other aspects of student media training are media coaching and "media opportunities," which come in the form of videotaped mock press conferences and "live fire" encounters with news media. This training and exposure to the media within an exercise context make the conditions very realistic. Approximately 20 Reserve and National Guard public affairs specialists and broadcasters from all over the United States travel to Maxwell Air Force Base to role-play the media and develop these news products.

Realism

Paul Needham, ICAF Supply Chain Management Concentration director, has been a longtime advocate of realism in JLASS logistics. For instance, as stated above, JLASS recently adopted the CFAST model into game play as its primary force tracking, deployment planning, and sustainment logistics tool. This is significant because CFAST is currently used by over half of the U.S. unified combatant commands and is on track to be adopted by all.

Also keeping tabs on JLASS realism during the execution phase are the subject

matter experts that each school employs at the game. Specialists from U.S. Strategic Command, the State Department, Coast Guard, and JSOU, as well as the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, help to round out the in-house AFWI experts, who are led by Commander Steve Crawford, USN (Ret.), of Northrop Grumman, now in his 14th year of JLASS. Retired from Active duty in 1999, Commander Crawford serves as the JLASS operations officer, coordinating many aspects of JLASS, such as scheduling the controllers, adjudication team, and media cell.

National Security Education

Another common comment from JLASS students is that every SLC student should participate in a JLASS exercise; the realism and intense experience it provides are unparalleled. Unfortunately, the support staff-to-student ratio would make this nearly impossible. Nonetheless, the benefits of JLASS reach far beyond the pupils involved in any particular exercise. Students certainly carry the insights they learn to future assignments. In addition, JLASS serves as a center of excellence for the faculty when they take their lessons back to their schools in the form of expertise, contacts, and curriculum ideas.

JLASS has evolved into a truly national security exercise involving all the instruments of national power, and it provides professional development for faculty and gamers alike. Today, the course increasingly focuses on interagency processes to promote better understanding and integration of military operations with the rest of the Federal Government. These skills are increasingly important to the accomplishment of national objectives. JLASS annually gives over 100 JPME students and faculty better understanding of the challenges of the interagency process and translating those objectives into operational success.

Over the last 25 years, what began as a single theater, operational level, computer simulated wargame has matured into the premier joint professional military education course and exercise. Look for the Joint Land, Aerospace, and Sea Simulation to continue to evolve over the coming years to keep up with changing global challenges, transform military forces, and refine intra-governmental processes. **JFQ**